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AUTHOR Gonzalez, Gustavo
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ABSTRACT

Thirteen Mexican-American children in Corpus Christi, Texas, most approximately six years old, were interviewed in Spanish for the purpose of establishing the phonology of their dialect. The linguistic competence of the children, not their performance, was of primary interest. A phonological chart was devised based on the data derived from the interviews. A certain amount of deviation was evidenced as a result of allophonic variation. Other deviations were found, however, that did not involve allophonic variation. These deviations can be grouped into the following six categories of phonological changes: 1) reduction of a consonant cluster; 2) insertion; 3) reduction; 4) vowel change, involving both assimilation and dissimilation; 5) consonant change, in which several specific types of substitution are apparent; and 6) metathesis. It is concluded that the Spanish-speaking first-grader in Corpus Christi is clearly capable of handling his own language. The traces of baby speech noted in this investigation suggest the possibility that the deviations are due partly to the lack of parental correction of speech patterns. However, the language development of these children can be determined only with more research. (LG)

SOUTHWEST EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY
Suite 550, Commodore Perry Hotel
Austin, Texas 78701

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Program Research and Evaluation Division

THE PHONOLOGY OF CORPUS CHRISTI SPANISH

*Final Report

(Summary of Part I)

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Thirteen informants were used in the study. All informants were Mexican Americans and [illegible] interviewing was done in Spanish. The children were picked at random f[illegible] experimental and control groups in the Corpus Christi Independent School District. Most of the informants were approximately six years old at the time of the interview. All interviews were tape recorded and are in the possession of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. The first interviews were conducted in November of 1967. The second interviews were completed in January, 1968.

Interviews, recordings, and transcriptions were done by the author.

The children were interviewed a total of one hour each, divided into two thirty-minute interviews. The interview procedure was essentially conversational in nature. The children were asked questions about everyday activities, about their schoolwork, their families, and so on. Certain linguistic structures were included in the course of the conversation. If

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*This linguistic investigation of Corpus Christi Spanish Phonology was written by Gustavo González, Test Development Linguist, with the Division of Program Research and Evaluation. Linguistic investigations of this type are extremely important in that they provide us with a scientific description of the language used by the target population, the Mexican Americans of Texas. These descriptions enable the Laboratory to devise teaching materials for these children.

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the child responded vocally and appropriately, it was assumed that he was linguistically competent with regard to the structure in question. An attempt was made to elicit from the child all the basic syntactic structures. Our primary interest, however, was not in the child's linguistic performance but in his competence.

Part I of the final report, entitled A Linguistic Profile of the Spanish Speaking First Grader in Corpus Christi, (M. A. Thesis, 1968) consists of the following: 1) An inventory and analysis of syntactic structures used by the children; 2) An inventory of verbs; 3) Transformations that the children were capable of performing; 4) Tenses produced by the children as well as those only understood but not utilized; and 5) Grammatical variants in the speech of the children.

After a careful examination of the data, a chart was devised of the sounds found in the speech of the informants. The chart is a composite of the sounds found in the data; not all the sounds appeared in any one child's inventory. It is worth mentioning that, in addition to being a composite chart, the sounds represented are not all phonemes. The sounds are arranged according to place of articulation, mode of articulation, and so forth.

SPANISH CONSONANTS

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	LABIAL	LABIO-DENTAL	DENTAL	ALVEO-PALATAL	VELAR	GLOTTAL
Stops	p b		t d		k g	
Affricates				č		
Fricatives	β̞ b̞	f v	ð̞ θ z	š	x ɣ̞	h
Nasals	m	ɱ	n	ñ	ŋ	
Laterals			l			
Median	w		r r̄	y		
		trill				

VOWELS

	FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK
High	i		u
Mid	e		o
Low		a	

The phonemes having allophonic variants in standard Spanish along with the distribution of these variants, is given below:

/d/ [d] after pause
after /n/
after /l/

[ð̞] elsewhere

/b/ [b] after pause
after boundary
after /m/

[β̞] elsewhere

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/g/	[g]	after pause after /n/ after a boundary element.
	[ɣ]	elsewhere
/s/	[z]	in environment /b/ /d/ /g/ /m/ /n/ /l/ /rr/
	[s]	elsewhere
/n/	[ŋ]	before velars
	[m]	before labials
	[n]	elsewhere

In the data, the distribution of the allophones of /b/ were slightly different from that of standard Spanish. The only environment in which the variant [b] occurred consistently was after a nasal. In all other environments, the labiodental voiced fricative [v] was in free variation with [β̞]. There was no systematic occurrence of these two sounds. The labiodental [v], which in the past has been ignored in analyses of this type, seems to be very much a part of the phonology of the speech of these children.

Another sound which is often omitted is the [š]. The sound did occur in the data in free variation with [č]. Although it occurred in non-contrastive distribution with [č] and was present in only two of the informants, it seems worthy of mention.

The deviations mentioned above were the only ones noticed in the speech of the informants as far as allophonic variations are concerned. There were deviations in pronunciation which did not involve allophonic variations. The rest of the report will concentrate on these deviations.

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It should be pointed out that, in the examples that follow, more than one type of change may be operating. An example of consonant cluster reduction may also include a change in vowel. In the interest of authenticity, we have rendered the examples exactly as they were encountered in the raw field data.

The errors encountered can be grouped into the following six categories:

I. Reduction of a Consonant Cluster. This involves the omission of one member of the consonant cluster. The following reductions were observed (given in phonemic transcription):

CONSONANT CLUSTER	Reduced to	EXAMPLES
br-	b-	brúha--búha brínka--bínka
-br-	-b-	kebró--kebó ómbre--ómbe kebráda--kebáda
-dr-	-r-	bídryos--bíryos pyédra--pérya
	-d-	padríno--padíno
fr-	f-	frihóles--fifóles frénte--fénte
gr-	r-	grandóte--randóte
	g-	grandóte--gandóte
-gr-	-r-	mugréro--muréro mugrósa--murósa
-kt-	-t-	doktór--dotór éktor--étor traktór--tratór
kr-	k-	krúsa--kúsa eskribír--eskibír
-lg-	-g-	sálga--saga
-nd-	-n-	dónde--dóne pintándo--pintáno lebantándo--lebantáno

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-ns-	-s-	mansána--masána
pl-	p-	planchándo--panchándo
pr-	p-	priméro--pimélo
-pr-	-p-	komprár--kompár
-rd-	-r-	perdió--peró tárde--táre
-rg-	-g-	kargándo--kagándo
-rk-	-k-	pórke--póke bárko--báko
-rl-	-l-	komponérla--komponéla ayárlo--hayálo
-rm-	-m-	traérme--traéme persignárme--persináme
-rn-	-n-	kárne--káne kwérnos--kwénos
-rs-	-s-	ponérse--ponése komérselo--komíselo paseárse--pasyáse
-rt-	-t-	párte--páte pwérta--kwéta
-sk-	-k-	eskwéla--ekwéla peskándo--pekándo
-sm-	-m-	mísmo--mímo chismoléras--chimoléras
-sp-	-p-	despwés--epwés despertár--repetá
-st-	-t-	éste--éte bistyéndo--bityéndo
-tr-	t-	tróka--tóka tres--tes
-tr-	-t-	retráto--retáto kwátro--kwáto

There is no way to predict in advance which member of the cluster will be omitted. The general tendency, however, appears to favor retention of the stop consonants (such as p, t, k). The single tap [r] seems more resis-

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tant to reduction than does, for example, the fricative allophone of the velar phoneme g. More data is needed to establish firmly the reduction of consonant clusters in the speech of children.

II. Insertion. This is the process whereby a vowel or consonant is placed where it is not expected. Examples:

tres---terés	entrár---enterár	ayár---hayár
tígres---tígeres	múchos---múnchos	nádye---naýdyen
tren---terén	plátanos---plántanos	áyre---áygre
ágwa---lágwa	óhos---lóhos	óhos---sóhos
úmo---húmo	láma---lámba	ayér---enyér
	léngwa---lwéngla	

It is evident from the above data that insertion occurs as an alternative to consonant cluster reduction. The e inserted in entrár and tres supports this: the tr cluster in each case was broken up by the insertion of the e. Another type of insertion comes about as a result of breaking the utterance at the inappropriate point. Lágwa is an example of this. What happened was that the child heard the article la with ágwa, assumed the combination to be a single word, and provided an article for it. The result is the phrase la lágwa. The same thing happens with sóhos. The child heard óhos, the plural form of óho, used with the plural article los. The child arrived at the conclusion that sóho was the singular of sóhos, when actually he had formed a new word as a result of inappropriate division of words. The child, from the plural phrase los óhos, had formed a faulty singular el sóho.

Two of the examples given above, lámba and náydyen, are both archaic forms and are not restricted to Texas Spanish. Hayár and húmo have come about as a result of associating the written symbol h with the English sound [h].

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The examples given should not imply that the children began with the standard Spanish word and used it as a base in changing to the new form. In all probability, the children were exposed to one form of the word and were not aware of any variants. No attempt has been made to show the process by which the child arrived at the deviations mentioned above. Rather, the standard form and the deviation are presented and accounted for as best as possible.

III. Reduction. This is the process whereby a single consonant, a vowel, or a whole syllable is deleted. Examples:

dónde---on
hugár---huár
pára---pa (preposition)
abwelíta---welíta
trabahár---trabahá
abía---bía
arríba---arría
aguhéro---buhéro
tódo---to
salír---salí
sentádo---sentáw
bwéno---wéno
respirár---espirár
están---tan (all other forms of estar)
agarré---garré
muchachíto---muchíto
eskondído---kondído
kolorádo---koloráw
peleár---peleá
akwéstate---kwéstate
atránkan---tránkan
ganár---ganá
akwésto---kósto
kansádo---kansáw
anteanóche---antenóche
gritándo---ritándo
todabía---tabía
akábo---kábo
en kása de---ánka
señór---señó
ayudába---yurába
anteayér---antyér
pwes---po
deskalsádo---deskalsáw
apréndan---préndan
amasándo---masándo
berdád---berá
eskondyéndose---kondyéndose

Several types of reduction are evident in the above examples. The first is the omission of a weak fricative, as is evident in huár, tabía, arría, to, wéno, ritándo. A second type is the reduction of the past participle -ado to -aw: koloráw, sentáw, kansáw, deskalsáw. A large percentage of the examples consist of omitting an unstressed syllable: on, pa, welíta, bía, tan (and all other forms of estar), garré, muchíto, kondído, kábo, yurába, kwéstate, tránkan, kósto, préndan, masándo, kondyéndose, buhéro. Some infinitives lost their final -r: trabahá, peleá, ganá. In one instance an entire phrase was reducted to a single word, ánka.

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IV. Vowel Change. One of the vowels is replaced by a different vowel. This includes the replacement of a vowel by two vowels or by a diphthong.

Examples:

benían---binían
desía---dihía
señoras---siñóras
persíge---parsíge
lwégo---lógo
ametrayadóras---matrayadóras
dormída---durmíra
sapátos---sopátos
peskwéso---pweskéso
retratáron---ratatáron
tóro---téro

lebánto---labánto
polisía---polesía
kuchíyo---kochíyo
muchachíto---mochachíto
impwésto---empwéstos
leones---lyónes

aerophlános---oruplános
papél---pepél
platikándo---plitikándo
relóh---liró
ponér---ponír

bisikléta---basikléta
bestí---bistí
dihíste---dehítes
persegír---persigír
birwélas---burwélas
polisía---polasía

hwégo---hwábo
subyó---sobyó
algodón---elgodón
mwérto---mwárto

The first type of vowel change appears to be due to vowel harmony: the vowel undergoing the change does so according to what vowel is incorporated in the syllable immediately following it. The resulting change may yield a vowel identical to the one in the following syllable, or it may yield a vowel that is similar to the following vowel in tongue height. The following examples will bear this out: binían, dihía, lógo, durmíra, ratatáron, labánto, pepél, bistí, persigír, plitikándo. Some of the examples do the opposite: instead of assimilating to the vowel in the syllable immediately following, they dissimilate. The following examples will bear this out: sopátos, téro, polesía, kochíyo, basikléta, dehítes. The rest of the examples involve sporadic changes and will not be examined further.

V. Consonant Change. A consonant is replaced by a different consonant phoneme. Examples:

kedámos---kerámos
tódo---tóro
aguhéro---buhéro
gitárra---gitára
afwéra---ahwéra
olbidó---olbiró

bigóte---bibote
náda---nára
myédo---myéro
pwédo---kwédo
fumár---humár
hwégos---hwébos

ído---íro
dinéro---ninéro
adéntro---arénto
fwi---hwi
despwés---deskwés
naránha---daránha

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detrás---retrás
pérro---péro
de---le
dormír---romír
agarrándo---agaláno
parése---palése
lámpara---rámpara
peskwéso---kweskwéso
píso---pího
dédo---déro
pwénte—hwénte
agarrár---agarár
apagadóra---aparadóra
kuchára---kuchárra
gótas---bótas
oído---orío
léhos---yéhos
kára---káda
tenedór---tenedól
oréha---oléha
barrér---balél
tóda---tóla

adéntro---aléntro
kórro---kóro
peskádos---peskáros
arríba---alíba
dísen---díhen
kadeníta---kabeníta
adelánte---alelánte
álgo---árgo
kédan---kéran
lebánta---yebánta
serrádo---seráw
bárkos---bálkos
fyérro---fyéro
dándo---yándo
kánas---gánas
négro---néglo
tyérra---téra
kwéro---kwélo
kárro---kálo
miré---milé
hwégan---hwéban
fwersúdo---hwersúdo

gérra---géra
bestído---bestíro
díse---ríse
peróta---peróta
málos---máros
tenedór---tenerór
oréha---oréna
kargándo---kalgándo
pedasítos---perasítos
serbésa---tebésa
tyérra---tyéra
bestído---behtío
frihóles---frifóles
lebantándo---balantándo
gústa---yústa
labándo---yabándo
rópa---lópa
yorándo---yolándo
óra---óla
kára---kála
relóh---lelóh
asína---ahína

Again, several types of substitution are evident here. The first is the substitution of /r/ for the fricative allophone of the /d/ phoneme. Examples: kerámos, íro, tóro, nára, myéra, arénto, olbiró, retrás, bestíro, peskáros, ríse, romír, tenerór, orío, kéran, perasítos, déro. The reverse substitution occurs, but is relatively rare: káda.

A second type of substitution is that of the fricative allophone of one phoneme for the fricative of a different phoneme:

[b̥] or [v] for [g̊]: biból̥e, buhéro, hwébos, bóta, hwéban.

[b̥] or [v] for [d̥]: kabeníta.

Type three includes the substitution of one fricative phoneme for another:

/h/ replaces /f/: hwi, ahwéra, humár, hwersúdo.

/f/ replaces /h/: frifóles.

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Type four includes the substitution of one stop phoneme for another:

/k/ replaces /p/: kwédo, deskwés, kweskwéso.

/n/ replaces /d/: ninéro.

/d/ replaces /n/: daránha.

Type five consists of the substitution of one sibilant phoneme for another:

/h/ replaces /s/: díhen, pího, behtío, ahína.

One of the most important alterations is that between /rr/ and /r/. It was so frequent in the speech of the informants that it deserves special mention. The following examples will illustrate:

péro (pérro)	kóro (kórro)
fyéro (fyérro)	tyéra (tyérra)
géra (gérra)	seráw (serráw)
gitára (gitárra)	

Most of the examples given above have a counterpart that differ from it only in that one phoneme. It is obvious that the informants were aware that the minimal pairs were different, although they did not so pronounce them. The determining factor, as far as semantics were concerned, appears to be the context. This leads to the suggestion that before the child is able to discriminate all the phonemes of his language, context plays a crucial role in the child's communication processes.

The last type of substitution that was noticed in the informants' speech was the replacement of /r/ and /rr/ by /l/, and of /l/ by /r/. Examples:

lópa	tenedól	kwélo	yoláno
óla	balél	milé	kála
alíba	kalgándo	oléha	kálo
agaláno	palése		

/r/ replaces /l/: rámpara, petóta, máros, árgo

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VI. Metathesis. This consists of transposition of the order of sounds within the word or between words. Examples:

lángwa---lwénga	ládran---lárdan	kíto---tíko
derrityéndo---redityéndo	kwádro---kwárdo	trénsa---ténsra
frénte---féntre	serkíta---sekríta	sírbe---síbre
eskribír---eskibrír	atrás---artás	pyérda---pyédra
lebánto---belánto	serbésa---sebrésa	trómpo---tómpro
dihíste---dihítes	ayáste---hayátes	kréo---kéro

CONCLUSION. This investigation clearly showed that the Spanish-speaking first grader in Corpus Christi is capable of handling his language. There remain some traces of baby speech, which leads to the theory that the deviations present in his speech are due in part to lack of correction of speech patterns on the part of parents. This cannot be determined conclusively until more research is carried out in the area of language development in Mexican American children. Only with more information can it be determined if these children are retarded or average as to their language development by the time they enter school.